

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
MCE-00 EB-08 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
DODE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13 H-01 AID-05 /080 W
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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2248
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USINT BAGHDAD
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USLO RIYADH
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JIDDA 4138

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA
SUBJECT: F-15 SALE: SOME IMPRESSIONS

SUMMARY: INITIAL EUPHORIC REACTION TO SALE APPROVAL HAS
SETTLED INTO MORE THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION OF EVENTS
AND CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE. ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE DIFFI-
CULT TO TIE SPECIFIC NEW BUSINESS OR CONTRACTS TO SENATE
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ACTION, MILITARY SALE UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BECOME IMPORTANT
FACTOR IN U.S.-SAUDI COMMERCIAL RELATIONS. SAUDIS MAY
NOT HAVE FORESEEN HOW DIFFICULT BATTLE WOULD BE, AND TERMS
OF DEBATE AND DISCUSSION MAY HAVE LEFT SOME ILL-FEELING.
MOST OF COMMENTARY REPEATS EXPRESSION "FIRST TIME" IN
VARIOUS CONTEXTS AND LOOKS FORWARD TO FURTHER U.S. MEA-
SURES TOWARD MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. EUPHORIA. INITIAL REACTION WAS EUPHORIC. EMBASSY COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR HOSTED LUNCH SHORTLY AFTER VOTE WHICH TURNED INTO FESTIVE CELEBRATION OF U.S.-SAUDI FRIENDSHIP. PRESIDENT OF JIDDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXPRESSED READINESS TO ASSIST ALL U.S. TRADE MISSIONS VISITING KINGDOM. PRINCE BANDAR BIN KHALID HAS SENT WORD THAT HE IS INTERESTED IN ARRANGEMENT WITH U.S. CONSTRUCTION FIRM--A SIGNIFICANT STEP FOR PRINCE ALREADY AGENT FOR LARGE DUTCH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY.

2. ALTHOUGH SAUDI BUSINESSMEN ARE TOO PROFIT MINDED TO LET F-15 SALE BECLOUD THEIR COMMERCIAL JUDGEMENT, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT FAVORABLE ACTION BY U.S. CONGRESS WILL CARRY SOME WEIGHT IN COMMERCIAL DECISIONS AND COULD, IN CLOSE DECISIONS, TIP SCALE IN FAVOR OF U.S. INTERESTS.

3. EMBASSY OFFICERS FOUND REQUESTS GETTING GREATER THAN USUAL ATTENTION FROM SAUDI OFFICIALS. FOR EXAMPLE, EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER'S PRESENTATION ON UNIFIL MET UNPRECEDENTED POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM MFA OFFICIAL WHO IN PAST HAD RECEIVED OUR PRESENTATIONS WITH POLITE AND VAGUELY WORDED PROMISES TO "SEE IF ANYONE HIGHER IS INTERESTED." OTHER EMBASSY EMPLOYEES HEARD FAVORABLE COMMENTS AT SOCIAL AND OFFICIAL OCCASIONS WHEN SUBJECT OF F-15'S WAS BROUGHT UP BY SAUDI CONTACTS.
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4. FIRST TIME. LIKE NEW BRIDEGROOM, SAUDIS ARE TAKING PARTICULAR SATISFACTION IN NOVELTY OF THEIR SITUATION. THUS INFORMATION MINISTER YAMANI TOLD CORRESPONDENT FOR KUWAITI AL-SIYASAH, "FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, THE WHITE HOUSE HAS SUCCEEDED IN PASSING IN THE CONGRESS WHAT IT WANTS TO PASS ON THE BASIS OF ITS OWN EVALUATION OF A CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL SITUATION." LATER IN SAME INTERVIEW YAMANI REPEATED PHRASE, NOTING, "THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE ISRAELI LOBBY HAS FAILED TO IMPOSE ITS WISHES ON THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION WHICH HAS NOW BECOME CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE COUNTRIES THAT ADOPT INDEPENDENT, LOGICAL, AND JUST STANDS AND VIEWS THAT MUST BE SUPPORTED." COMMENTATOR IN AL-MADINA WROTE "THE AMERICANS SOLD ARMS TO THE ARABS IN THE PAST, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT AN ARAB COUNTRY, WHICH IS THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, GETS U.S. ARMS EQUAL IN SOPHISTICATION AND SIZE TO THE ARMS RECEIVED BY THE ISRAELIS. IT IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME IN WHICH THE AMERICANS PLACE THE ARMING OF THE ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS AT THE SAME LEVEL AND DISCUSS THIS QUESTION AS ONE UNIT.

5. COUNTERPOINT: DESPIT OBVIOUS SATISFACTION, THERE
REMAIN A FEW BRUISED FEELINGS. PERHAPS SAUDIS DID NOT
REALIZE THAT CONTROVERSY OVER APPROVAL OF F-15 SALE WOULD
LEAD TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN U.S. WHICH NAMED IRAQ, THE PDRY
AND EVEN IRAN AS POTENTIAL ENEMIES. SUCH PUBLIC IDENTIFI-
CATION OF OTHER ARABS OR OTHER MOSLEMS AS POTENTIAL ENEMIES
IS COMPLETELY AT VARIANCE WITH USUAL SOFT SPOKEN, CONCIL-
IATORY TONE OF SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENTS AND STRIKES
AT VERY BASES OF SAUDI POLICY OF SUPPORTING ARAB AND ISLAMIC
SOLIDARITY. WHATEVER SAUDIS MAY FEEL AND SAY ABOUT OTHER
COUNTRIES PRIVATELY, THEY NEVER PUBLICLY STATE THAT THEY
VIEW ANY FELLOW ARAB (OR MOSLEM) STATE AS A THREAT. CER-
TAIN COUNTRIES, LIKE ERRING FAMILY MEMBERS MAY BE LED
ASTRAY; BUT STRAYING FROM THE STRAIGHT PATH DOES NOT MEAN
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EXPULSION FROM THE FAMILY.

6. SENIOR SAUDI MILITARY OFFICER TOLD DATT THAT HE ESPE-
CIALLY REGRETTED NAMING OF PDRY AS POTENTIAL THREAT REQUIR-
ING SAUDIS TO PURCHASE NEW AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THAT SUCH
TALK, COMBINED WITH TALK OF BASING F-15'S AT KHAMIS MUSHAYT,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JIDDA 4138

COULD GIVE PDRY EXCUSE TO REQUEST MORE SOPHISTICATED MILITARY AID FROM USSR AND LEAD TO ADENIS FALLING FURTHER UNDER COMMUNIST INFLUENCE.

7. PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF SAUDI PERCEPTIONS OF THREATS FROM "BROTHERLY" IRAQ AND PDRY MAY BE VIEWED AS CONSEQUENCE OF SAUDI EMERGENCE INTO MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN REGIONAL AND WORLD AFFAIRS. WE ALREADY KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT THIS EMER-
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GENCE HAS BROUGHT PROBLEMS, ONE OF WHICH IS THAT KINGDOM'S FOREIGN RELATIONS ARE NO LONGER AREA CLOSED TO DISCUSSION, BUT HAVE BECOME SUBJECT OF FREE-WHEELING DEBATES IN U.S. MEDIA AND CONGRESS. ACCOMPANYING EMBARRASSMENT WILL NOT BE WELCOMED BY SAUDIS.

8. THE FUTURE. AFTER QUIETING OF INITIAL EUPHORIA, PRESS COMMENT BEGAN TO CONSIDER FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF AIRCRAFT SALE. IT IS OPEN QUESTION WHETHER SAUDI EFFORTS TO GAIN APPROVAL OF SALE WILL BE FOLLOWED UP OR WHETHER COUNTRY WILL FOLLOW PASSIVE LINE SEEMINGLY ADVOCATED BY INFORMATION MINISTER YAMANI WHO SAID (IN INTERVIEW PREVIOUSLY NOTED) THAT HE NOW EXPECTED CHANGE IN ATTITUDE OF U.S. ADMINISTRATION BECAUSE OF ROLE OF SAUDI LOBBY IN GAINING APPROVAL OF SALE AND "PARTICULARLY SINCE WE BELIEVE THAT CAUSE IS JUST." IF SAUDIS ARE GOING TO USE "JUST CAUSE" ARGUMENT TO JUSTIFY NOT PUTTING THEIR CASE EFFECTIVELY TO WORLD PUBLIC OPINION, THEN THEY MAY FIND THEMSELVES DISAPPOINTED WHEN F-15 SALE IS NOT FOLLOWED BY PROGRESS IN OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN SUCH AS MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM.

9. OTHER SAUDI OPINION URGES FURTHER ACTION BOTH FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND U.S. MAY 24 AL-RIYADH, FOR EXAMPLE, IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "CARTER'S OPPORTUNITY" URGES PRESIDENT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY HE HAS CREATED FOR HIMSELF AND FOLLOW THIS SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE WITH OTHERS

AND "NOT TO MAKE THE AIRCRAFT DEAL AN ELECTION YEAR TRAP WHICH WILL FORCE HIM TO INUNDATE ISRAEL WITH NEW WEAPONS TO SATISFY THE ZIONIST VOTER." SAME EDITORIAL NOTES THAT MOST IMPORTANT POSITIVE RESULT OF F-15 SALE APPROVAL WAS TO CHECK SOVIET MOVES IN ARAB WORLD AND TO SAFEGUARD POSITION OF PRO-AMERICAN ARAB STATES: "BREZHNEV MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL

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TENT WITH THE SOVIETS' ARABS AND OUGHT TO GIVE UP LOITERING AT THE DOORS OF AMERICA'S ARABS. FOR THOSE DOORS WILL NEVER BE OPENED TO HIM. AND SOME OF THE DOORS OF THE SOVIET ARABS ARE EXPECTED TO BE SLAMMED IN BREZHNEV'S FACE IF CARTER KNOWS HOW TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE NOW EXISTING IN THE MIDDLE EAST."

10. COMMENT: APPROVAL OF F-15 SALE HAS BUILT UP ENORMOUS STORE OF GOOD WILL FOR U.S. IN SAUDI ARABIA WHICH SHOULD BE USED TO THE GREATEST ADVANTAGE. HOWEVER, MANY SAUDIS STILL DO NOT REALIZE THAT FORMATION OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IS MORE COMPLEX THAN MAKING JUDGEMENTS OF RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE. THEY HOLD SIMPLIFIED VIEW THAT F-15 SALE APPROVAL WAS VICTORY OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH OVER ABSOLUTE ERROR AND PROVED THAT U.S. ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESS, AND PUBLIC OPINION HAS FINALLY TAKEN ACTION TO CORRECT YEARS OF MISTAKES. THEY MAY CONSEQUENTLY EXPECT U.S. TO ACT DECISIVELY TO RECTIFY OTHER FOREIGN POLICY "ERRORS" IN MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, AND ELSEWHERE. IF THESE RAISED EXPECTATIONS OF NEW U.S. INITIATIVES ARE NOT FILLED, SAUDIS MAY BE DISAPPOINTED THAT AMERICANS HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO STRAIGHT PATH.
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